

“You can’t go to work if your kids aren’t safe in good child care, and subsidized child care for all WorkFirst families will remain a core value of WorkFirst as long as I am Governor.”

As Governor, I have a responsibility to help families break the cycle of poverty, and to provide food, shelter, and physical safety to the most vulnerable among us – children, elderly and disabled adults.

My supplemental budget proposal preserves child care support for parents enrolled in the state’s welfare-to-work program called WorkFirst. And it helps low-income families struggling to pay high-cost heat and utility bills this winter. Improvements are made in staffing levels necessary to ensure that child protection caseworkers are able to respond quickly to reports of child abuse and neglect, and to make more frequent visits to children protected by state child welfare laws.

My budget also recognizes the sacrifices made by our military men and women fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, providing additional resources to help them adjust to civilian life when they return home.

My Budget for Improving Human Services Is:

STRATEGIC

Strengthens Washington’s welfare-to-work program, giving low-income parents a better chance at breaking the cycle of poverty for thousands of families while reducing society’s burden to support and assist low-income families.

RESPONSIBLE

Provides low-income families financial help to pay rising electricity and fuel costs this winter. Honors and cares for war veterans returning home from war zones. New funding helps veterans adjust to civilian life.

ACCOUNTABLE

Ensures that child protection caseworkers are able to respond quickly to reports of child abuse and neglect.

BY THE NUMBERS : Washington provides help to 49,000 citizens in long-term care, 17,000 kids and 30,000 people with disabilities.

Governor Gregoire's Supplemental Budget for Human Services

Strengthens WorkFirst	Strengthens welfare-to-work program. Increased funding supports the WorkFirst program serving families receiving Temporary Assistance cash grants as they get help finding jobs. The additional funds, combined with significant changes in how the program operates, better ensures it can continue to break the cycle of poverty. <i>\$46 million GF-State</i>
Helps low-income families pay heating bills	Helps low-income families pay utility bills. The Utilities and Transportation Commission's penalty fund provides \$7.6 million to boost the state's existing program to help low-income people pay high heating and lighting costs this winter. Governor Gregoire will ask the Legislature to act to provide this funding during the first week of the 2006 legislative session. In addition, the cap on an existing public utilities tax credit, which is used to help low-income families pay utility bills, is raised to \$8.5 million, a \$6 million increase.
Improves child protection	<p>Strengthens protection of children in state care. Improvements are made in staffing levels necessary to ensure that child protection caseworkers are able to respond quickly to reports of child abuse and neglect, and to make more frequent visits to children protected by state child welfare laws. <i>\$6.2 million GF-State</i></p> <p>Increases special-needs adoption assistance. Significant new assistance is provided to families who adopt special-needs foster children. <i>\$12.7 million GF-State</i></p> <p>Maintains a strong foster care system. Funding is increased to serve an average 8,000 children living in foster care and group care. Current funding to serve these children is not enough to cover current service levels. <i>\$4 million GF-State</i></p> <p>Creates better information management system to protect and help children. Begins work to replace the Case and Management Information System at the Department of Social and Health Services. A new computerized system not only will provide information to protect children but also will help caseworkers track and manage their health and education needs. <i>\$3.8 million GF-State</i></p>
Assists veterans	Increases services to military veterans. Expands the skilled nursing care facility at the Washington Veteran's Home at Retsil by 40 new beds, using \$1.5 million in federal dollars. Increases outreach services for service men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, including public benefits and for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. New transitional housing for homeless veterans is established. Funds design for a veterans' cemetery in Eastern Washington, with the cost reimbursed by the federal government. <i>\$1 million GF-State, \$1.5 million federal funds</i>
Improves mental health services	Expands state mental hospitals' capacity. Opens an additional adult psychiatric ward at Western State Hospital to serve court-ordered civilly committed mental health patients. Provides additional capacity at Eastern State Hospital to meet current demand for court-ordered forensic competency evaluation and treatment services to criminal defendants with mental health disorders. <i>\$8.3 million GF-State</i>
Keeps up with costs of long-term care	Maintains long-term care services. Provides additional funds for long-term care in homes for the elderly and disabled to meet increased client costs. Continues to provide long-term care to 34 immigrants made ineligible for federal assistance due to rule change. <i>\$26.5 million GF-State</i>